

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03
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UNCLAS ISFAHAN 0021

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT PINS IR SHUM
SUBJ: TRIAL OF ISFAHAN RELIGIOUS ASSASSINS

REF: ISFAHAN 0014

1. TRIAL OF ACCUSED RELIGIOUS ASSASSINS BEGAN AS EXPECTED
FEB 22 IN REGULAR COURTROOM OF JUSTICE MINISTRY PROVINCIAL
OFFICE. ONLY FAMILIES OF VICTIMS, INTERESTED OFFICIALS, AND
EPS OF LEGAL PROFESSION HAVE BEEN ADMITTED, DUE,
ACCORDING TO JUSTICE OFFICIALS, TO LIMITED SIZE OF COURTROOM.
FAMILIES OF ACCUSED HAVE NOT BEEN ADMITTED. THERE HAS BEEN
MINOR BUT WIDESPREAD PUBLIC DISCONTENT WITH FAILURE OF AUTHO-
RITIES TO ARRANGE ROOMIER VENUE.

2. 22 ALLEGED MEMBERS OF RELIGIOUS TERRORISTS GROUP
STAND ACCUSED OF CONSPIRACY TO ASSASSINATE 2 RELIGIOUS
LEADERS, AYATOLLAH SHAMSABADI AND SHAIKH GHANBAR ALI SAFARZADEH,
AND "SILENCING" OF GROUP MEMBER RAMEZAN MEHDIZADEH WHEN HE
THREATENED TO TURN AGAINST THEM, OF CONSPIRACY GROUP,
REPUTED LEADER, SEYYED MEHDI HASHEMI, IS ACCUSED OF ORDER-
ING ALL 3 DEATHS; GROUP MEMBERS MOHAMMAD HOSSEIN
JAAFARZADEH AND ASSADOLLAH SHAFIZADEH ARE ACCUSED OF SHAMS-
ABADI MURDER; MEMBERS HASSAN ALI SHAFIZADEH AND HOSSEIN
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MORADI ARE ACCUSED OF SAFARZADEH MURDER; AND MORADI IS ALSO
ACCUSED OF MEHDIZADEH "HIT."

3. AFTER 8 SESSIONS OF TRIAL, 8 DEFENDANTS HAVE
BEEN QUESTIONED ON WITNESS STAND WITH NO SURPRISES. REPUTED
LEADER, SEYYED MEHDI HASHIMI, DENIED PARTICIPATING IN ANY
OF MURDERS BUT SAID, "SOME OF ACCUSED ARE GUILTY AND SHOULD

BE PUNISHED". ALL DEFENDANTS HAVE REFUSED IMPLICATE HASHEMI UNDER QUESTIONING, REMAINING SILENT EVEN AFTER HASHEMI'S ACCUSATION. ONE DEFENDANT, MOHAMMAD HOSSEIN JAAFARZADEH, ADMITTED BEING PART OF GROUP WHICH ABDUCTED SHAMSABADI, AND RELATED DETAILS OF KILLING, BUT DENIED INTENT TO MURDER. HE REPEATEDLY CLAIMED AYATOLLAH DIED OF HEART ATTACK. AUTOPSY, HOWEVER, SHOWED CAUSE OF DEATH AS BROKEN NECK FOLLOWED BY STRANGULATION ATTEMPT. ANOTHER DEFENDANT, AMIR GHOLI HAMZEZHAADEH, ADMITTED COMPLICITY IN MEHDIZADEH MURDER BUT DENIED PARTICIPATING IN SHAMSABADI AND SAFARZADEH KILLINGS.

4. ISFAHAN PUBLIC PROSECUTOR HAS DEMANDED DEATH PENALTY FOR ALL BUT 1 OF 22 ACCUSED, CALLING FOR PUNISHMENT WITHOUT LENIENCY. DURING APPEARANCES AS WITNESSES, BROTHER OF AYATOLLAH SHAMSABADI ALSO CALLED FOR SEVEREST PENALTY UNDER LAW AND A WELL KNOWN RELIGIOUS WRITER OF SHAHID JAVEED EXPRESSED DISGUST WITH GROUP'S ACTIONS.

5. MOHAMMAD HOSSEIN JAAFARZADEH AND ASSADOLLAH SHAFIZADEH, ACCUSED OF SHAMSABADI KILLING, TOLD COURT DURING QUESTIONING THEY HAD BEEN KEPT IN SMALL ISOLATION CELLS BY POLICE. SHAFIZADEH CLAIMED VERSION OF STORY HE TOLD WHILE IN PRISON WAS INVALID DUE HIS DIMINISHED RESPONSIBILITY RESULTING FROM MENTAL STRESS. JAAFARZADEH SEIZED OPPORTUNITY TO REITERATE GROUP'S BASIC THESIS THAT RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES FORFEIT RESPECT AND OBEDIENCE BY MIS-USE OF CONTRIBUTIONS COLLECTED FOR PROGRESS OF ISLAM.

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6. LEGAL SOURCES EXPECT TRIAL TO FINISH BEFORE MARCH 21 NOW RUZ HOLIDAY WITH DEATH SENTENCES POSSIBLE FOR HASHEMI, JAAFARZADEH, SHAFIZADEH AND MORADI, BUT LESS LIKELY FOR OTHER CONSPIRACY PARTICIPANTS. WHILE PUBLIC REMAINS CONCERNED AND INTERESTED, TRIAL HAS BEGUN TO LOSE IMMEDIACY AND NEWSPAPER REPORTING HAS RETREATED TO INSIDE PAGES. ANNOUNCEMENTS OF VERDICTS WILL PROBABLY COINCIDE WITH LAST MINUTE PREPARATIONS FOR IRAN'S BIGGEST NATIONAL HOLIDAY, MAKING WIDESPREAD OR LENGTHY PUBLIC REACTION OR PROTEST HIGHLY UNLIKELY AND CLOSING OUT BUSINESS OF OLD YEAR IN TRADITIONALLY NEAT FASHION BEFORE VERNAL EQUINOX.

MARSHALL

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Message Attributes

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